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ABSTRACT

This tip sheet offers guidelines for instructors who are working with a tutor for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing. It is assumed that the tutor is not fluent in sign language, the student's primary mode of communication is signed communication, tutoring interactions do not take place in the classroom, and the tutor is either a teaching faculty member or a special education staff member. Guidelines for course structure/presentation stress the importance of clear expectations being stated in the course syllabus, and use of peer notetakers to help the student concentrate on the professor and class. Characteristics of an ideal tutoring session are identified, including: the student has a basic understanding of supporting concepts; the student has realistic time expectations for tutoring; and the tutor has a full understanding of the subject/concept in question. Also specified are legitimate expectations for tutors to have of students (such as seeking tutoring assistance early), and for students to have of tutors (such as being available on a regular or as-needed basis). Other tips for tutors include sitting across from the student being tutored, using many visuals, and focusing on unfamiliar vocabulary. (DB)

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# NETAC

# TEACHER TIPSHEET

# TUTORING

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# Tutoring

Tutoring, as defined for this Tipsheet, is a student-driven interaction in which a tutor is enlisted to explain and clarify academic content and/or instructions to a deaf or hard-of-hearing student. It is assumed that the tutor is not fluent in the use of sign language, the student's primary mode of communication is signed communication, tutoring interactions do not take place in the classroom, and the tutor is either a teaching faculty member or a special education staff member.

There are two considerations for course structure/presentation that will reduce the incidence of tutoring being requested by deaf students.

1. If expectations for courses are clearly explained in a course syllabus, the student will have a clear reference for understanding issues such as grading policies, paper and project requirements, due dates for homework, details regarding exams, etc.
2. Peer notetakers, paid or volunteer, can help deaf students concentrate on what is happening in class, without breaking eye contact with the professor and what is happening in class. It would also be helpful if the professor periodically reviewed the notetaker's notes to make sure that deaf students are correctly getting all of the information presented in class.

Given adequate attention to these two considerations, there will still be situations in which a deaf student will request tutoring. When tutoring occurs, the interaction should be as beneficial as possible for all participants.

**Characteristics of an ideal tutoring session**

An ideal tutoring session, one in which everyone is satisfied with the outcomes, will have most of these characteristics:

1. The student has identified a specific concern.
2. The student has a basic understanding of supporting concepts.
3. The student has independently attempted to understand the concept.
4. The student has realistic time expectations for tutoring.
5. The tutor and the student communicate well with each other.
6. The tutor has a full understanding of the subject/concept in question.
7. The concept is explained, understood, and can be applied to the satisfaction of both the tutor and the student.

If you can get to the last outcome listed above, then you have successfully provided tutoring. If you cannot get to the last outcome, you may need to better communicate what you expect from your students. Legitimate expectations for tutors to have of their students are:

1. Students should seek tutoring when they have difficulty understanding a concept; they should not wait until confusion builds upon confusion.
2. Students should have realistic expectations of tutoring. A student who shows up for one hour of tutoring and says, "I don't understand chapters 1-5 and we have a test tomorrow" does not have realistic expectations of tutoring.
3. Students should try to make a reasonable accommodation to the communication style and capabilities of their tutor.

Students also have expectations of their tutors, such as:

1. Tutors should be familiar with all the requirements for courses they tutor, including classroom lectures, reading assignments, individual and group presentations, and preparation for exams (though not a problem for faculty tutoring deaf students in classes they teach, it does require good liaison between classroom faculty and staff tutors).
2. Tutors need to be available to students on a regular or an as-needed basis, depending on the needs of the student.
3. Place and time availability of tutoring should fit the student's schedule.
4. Tutors should make a reasonable accommodation to the communication needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

Other tips that may be beneficial are:
When a deaf student comes in for tutoring, it may be beneficial to sit across from, rather than next to, the student. If you are using a black/ white board during tutoring, do not talk to the board and do not start talking until you have the student's attention.

Use as many visuals as possible. Writing down important points as you say them will help the student follow you, while presenting information in an appropriate sequence. You may write key words and important points on a pad to be passed back-and-forth with the student or you may use a board if one is available.

Like many other students, deaf students often have difficulty with technical vocabulary and problem solving. When you explain a concept and use technical vocabulary in the explanation, ask students to explain key words/concepts before you continue. Also, shortly after assigning problems/projects, ask students to outline their problem/project solving approach.

Once you feel you have explained a concept and the student has expressed his/her understanding, ask the student to demonstrate that understanding through explanation and/or application of the concept.

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